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**1968/09/13**

*Pres file*

Friday, September 13, 1968 -- 2:00 p.m.

Mr. President:

Pursuant to a request (Jim Jones to Brom Smith), herewith notes on two matters for your 6:00p.m. talk with Ken Crawford.

1. Status of Peace Talks. There is no substantive progress yet in Paris. But it is our judgment that after the conventions Hanoi faces a fundamental political decision:

- to negotiate with this Administration; or
- to deal with the next Administration.

It also faces a fundamental military decision:

- to continue the third wave offensive;
- to stretch it out;
- to call it off.

After ten days of intensive military activity (Aug. 18-28), things are quieter for the moment.

We shall probably have the answer to those questions in the days and weeks ahead. We cannot forecast them now. The two Conventions were as helpful as anything could be in suggesting that they have no substantial reason to wait. Moreover, we have hopes that six months from now the Saigon government, the ARVN, and the military position on the ground will be even better than it is now. Nevertheless, we do not fully understand the minds of the men in Hanoi. We can only:

- do everything imaginable to achieve an honorable settlement at the earliest possible date;
- but if that is not possible, to leave to the next President the best possible situation politically in Saigon and militarily on the ground.

2. Comments by Vice President Humphrey on Vietnam.

It is essential that the Vice President speak his views freely.

On the question of troop withdrawals for example, there have been two predictions by men who have a right to a judgment:

- late in 1967, at the National Press Club, Gen. Westmoreland said that "within two years" he thought "some U.S. forces might be withdrawn."
- President Thieu said quite recently he thought there might be some U.S. troop withdrawals in 1969 and repeated this in Honolulu.

The President, however, has wished to avoid such predictions, because there are always grave uncertainties in war.